

Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

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When Jesus entered Jerusalem, shortly before his execution, why did the crowds quote from Psalm 118? “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ([Mark 11:9](#)). In the [Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament](#), Rick E. Watts states:

Although the evidence is late, its widespread nature suggests that [Ps. 118](#) was sung during the Second Temple era on Passover Eve and subsequently integrated into other feasts in which [Ps. 118:25](#) [“Save us!” = Hosanna] was recited.



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So, as Jesus entered Jerusalem for that last Passover feast, Psalm 118 would have been on worshipers’ minds. No wonder Jesus also quotes from the Psalm a few days later while disputing the religious leaders ([Mark 12:10-11](#)). To understand Jesus’ triumphal entry, his passion week, and Good Friday, we should get a handle

on this Psalm.

Observation

Psalm 118 has more repetition than most psalms:

- Let so-and-so say, “His steadfast love endures forever” ([Ps 118:2,3,4](#))
- The Lord is on my side ([Ps 118:6,7](#))
- It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in... ([Ps 118:8,9](#))
- In the name of the Lord I cut them off ([Ps 118:10,11,12](#))
- They surrounded me ([Ps 118:11,12](#))
- The right hand of the Lord ([Ps 118:15,16](#))
- You are my God ([Ps 118:28](#))

All this repetition gives the psalm a lilting, chanting feel. You can imagine the energy and rhythm carried throughout.

We find the most significant repetition in verses 1 and 29. The psalm begins and ends with the same statement:

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

These bookends highlight the psalm’s main purpose: To recruit others to give thanks to the Lord. Why?

1. For he is good.
2. For his steadfast love endures forever.

Structure: Digging deeper, we can see the psalm following these thoughts in its very outline:

1. Introduction: Let all who worship the Lord give thanks – 1-4
2. For he is good – 5-18
3. For his steadfast love endures forever – 19-28
4. Conclusion: Give thanks to the Lord – 29

Interpretation

Why is there so much repetition of short phrases? Clearly, the poet wants the people to join him in giving thanks. He tries to whip up the crowd, and he does so

with a poem, a few mantras, even a song. He says it explicitly in verses 14-15:

The Lord is my strength and **my song**; he has become my salvation. **Glad songs** of salvation are in the tents of the righteous.

While [Ps 118:5-13](#) describes the Lord's salvation for this distressed king, out among the nations and fighting the Lord's battles, [Ps 118:14-18](#) shows him including the crowds in his celebration.

So in [Ps 118:19](#), a homecoming parade begins at the city gates. From [Ps 118:22-23](#), the pronouns shift from singular (I) to plural (we), so the crowds have joined the parade. In [Ps 118:26](#), the parade makes its way to the temple, from which the priests call down a blessing on this returning, conquering king. And the parade continues into the temple complex, up to the altar of burnt offering, where they give thanks for the festal sacrifice ([Ps 118:27](#)).

The parade climaxes with the offering of a substitute for king and people. The king didn't die among the hostile nations ([Ps 118:10,17](#)). The people didn't die; God is building them up around the cornerstone of their king ([Ps 118:22-24](#)). But the festal sacrifice dies in their place so they can shout, "You are my God...You are my God" ([Ps 118:28](#)).

Main Point

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good (saving the king from his distress); for his steadfast love endures forever (causing the people to join the king's celebration).

Connection to Jesus

Can you see any parallels yet between Psalm 118 and Jesus' passion week? He rode into Jerusalem like a conquering king ([Mark 11:7-10](#)). The crowd joins the homecoming parade.

Yet his true distress is yet to come. He is not threatened by the hostile nations, but by his own people. Upon entering the city, he makes a beeline for the temple ([Mark 11:11](#)), but he finds no celebration. Instead of blessing him, the chief priests try to trap him ([Mark 11:27-12:44](#)).

Instead of celebrating a climactic festal sacrifice, Jesus must himself *become* the

festal sacrifice. If the people are to rejoice in the day the Lord has made, this king must die.

Application

1. On this Good Friday, please **remember what kind of savior Jesus had to be**. His distress brought you a song. He died, so you could live. He was disciplined, so you could become sons and daughters of God.
2. **Turn your distress into song**. Life is hard, and distress is real, but Psalm 118 gives you a way forward – a way to turn your distress into song. Though distress is real, it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in presidential primaries. Remember often and recount the Lord's salvation, and see if that doesn't put your distress in perspective.
3. **Join the parade**. Though our faith focuses on one man's death for all the people, Christianity is not ultimately a funeral march but a homecoming parade. If the music or the children are too loud in your church, it might mean you're not vigorous enough. Please try to keep up when we worship the Lord Jesus, the blessed king who has come in the name of the Lord.

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